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Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.

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Statement

1. The Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, has functioned for over 40 years, providing over $1.5 million in grants to 350 organizations in 72 developing countries for grass-roots, local projects, many of which further the Millennium Development Goals. Since achieving its consultative status, the Fund has participated in every session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

2. The Fund recognizes that, throughout the world, women and girls have not had the same opportunity to enter the workforce in the sciences, engineering and mathematics professions as their male counterparts. Though it appears that women do better in achieving salaries comparable to those of their male counterparts employed in these fields, there are considerably fewer women who remain in these fields and those who do often find it difficult to be promoted into management and administrative positions.

3. The Fund calls the Commission's attention to its Erna Hamburger Fund, which is specifically designed to support projects for education and training in the sciences. In 1988, Erna Hamburger, a former vice-president of the board of the Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund, was honoured by her many friends who established an endowment in her name. The endowment has reached over $75,000, providing grants for projects that encourage the education of girls in developing countries in mathematics, science, or engineering.

4. Eight grants have been issued since 1993:

- In the Philippines, in 1993, a grant from the Fund supported the purchase of computer equipment, which enabled the Science and Technology Advisory Council to provide hands-on science materials in rural areas. The programme was subsequently given further support from the United Nations Development Programme.
- In Ghana, in 1998, the Fund provided support to a programme that helped break the stereotype that girls who entered science, mathematics and engineering programmes were less feminine.
- Also in Ghana, in 2001, the Fund supported enhanced teacher training in science and mathematics, providing laboratory equipment and textbooks in a remote area.
- In Fiji, in 2002, the Fund established a project that brought together teachers and girls from 10 remote areas to foster interest and understanding of the physical and applied sciences.
- In Ghana, in 2003, a grant from the Fund allowed for the purchase of chemicals and other materials needed to fund workshops for teachers and students, creating awareness of science-related fields for girls.
- In Cameroon, in 2003, the Fund supported a seminar for 100 girls from six rural areas to provide education in science-related careers and to minimize the stigma of women in the sciences.

- In Fiji, in 2005, the Fund supported an additional science, technology, engineering and mathematics workshop for 10 junior secondary schools.
- In India, in 2010, the Fund equipped a laboratory for the Auxilium Girls' School in Tripura.

5. The Fund recognizes that it reaches only a small number of those in need. Locally identified projects have been successful and provide examples for others to follow.